

**Message:** “Fit to be Tied” – Part II **Text:** I Thes. 4:1-8 HPC 6/27/10

**INTRO:** Last week we examined the summary of Biblical teachings on marriage found printed on the back of your outline. We looked at the metaphors of the home and military that conveyed security and safety in a marriage. Finally we noted that both denominations and the secular culture are trying to obliterate male and female and re-define marriage simply as “**two persons who love each other.**” This week our General Assembly will decide whether to keep or discard the Biblical definition of marriage. Then we looked at Questions for a fit marriage: 1) Have you done your observational homework? And 2) Are you emotionally prepared? Today we continue with the question:

## **I. AM I THE RIGHT PERSON?**

**A. Be the right person** – Friends, marriage is far more than finding the right person, it is being the right person. The great preacher Harry Emerson Fosdick:

**Quote:** “It is not marriages that fail, it is people who fail.”

Too often says Tony Campolo, we marry because we think our mate will over-come our inadequacies and make us complete. The problem with this faulty assumption is we overtax and destroy our mate in the process. Instead of being responsible for our own happiness, we predicate it upon getting certain things from our spouse. If those things are not provided, we blame them for our unhappiness. No human can be a god or goddess to someone else. Only God can be God and supply all our needs, not another fallible person like ourselves.

**Illus:** Kristy and I learned this theological truth early in our marriage and it has served us well. We are not perfect people and we can’t make each other happy by being each other’s god or goddess to fill in our own inadequacies. We are responsible for our own joy and find it in a love relationship with God. Now the good news is, once our priority is making God number one and pleasing him not our spouse or others, we suddenly become much more pleasing to our spouse and others. Once we understand only Jesus was perfect and can model our expectations, we take this expectation off our mate. We begin to see how we need to change and grow in our marriage instead of focusing these impossible expectations on our mate.

**B. Live to please God more and more** – living to please God is a journey not a destination. Because of sin, we never arrive this side of heaven. The Christian lifestyle is learned. One that we do as Paul says “**more and more**” as we live under the authority of Jesus and seek to obey the wisdom of scripture. Paul affirms the progress of Thessalonians where they are and encourages their continued growth to please God. Our secular culture lives by the “**ethic of the autonomous self**” – doing what we want and pleasing self first not God. When both husband and wife put God first, they can challenge each other to grow in their faith and love. So on to ? #3:

## II. WHAT IS HIS/HER FAMILY BACKGROUND?

**A. No one has a perfect background** – That being said, some who have great backgrounds shipwreck their marriages and others with miserable backgrounds use what they learned from their pain to do things differently and make great marriages. We have heard those testimonies here at the Patch from our own leaders. The fact is: when you marry someone you marry his or her family for better or worse too.

**HUMOR:** I like the story of the young man who wanted to marry a certain girl, but he had to ask for her hand from his future father-in-law. The man was gruff, tough, and not well liked by the boy. Yet, with fear and grumbling, he went to the father-in-law to be and asked for his daughter's hand in marriage. He replied:

**“It looks like you want me for a father-in-law, is that right?”** To wit the son-in-law to be said: **“No, it is the only way I can marry your daughter.”** Friends, when you marry the person, you marry their family and background.

**B. What to look for in a background** – John Maxwell lists 7 things to look for in a future spouse's past.

1. **Childhood Happiness** – did the person have a happy childhood.
2. **Parent happiness** – do their mother and father seem upbeat about life.
3. **Relationship between the child and parent** – how do they treat one another? What about their siblings?
4. **Home discipline** – has there been discipline in the home? Were there boundaries and guidelines that provided security and love?
5. **Family History** – was alcohol, drug, physical or sexual abuse involved?
6. **Positive attitude** – what kind of attitude is there in the family? Cheerful and sanguine? Gloomy-doomy? Melancholy? Critical with cut downs?
7. **A sense of security** – was there lots of unconditional love in their home?

## III. AM I FINANCIALLY PREPARED FOR MARRIAGE?

**A. You are never fully prepared** - In a sense I guess you are never prepared, it is a faith proposition. Someone once said:

**Quote:** “Don't marry for money, you can borrow it cheaper!”

A SS teacher was telling her students about how Abraham and Sarah waited to have Isaac until in their 90's. When the teacher asked what the kids had learned, one bright lad replied: **“They waited until they could afford to have kids.”**

**B. Preparation starts early** – conflict over money is one of the major causes of marital discord and breakups. Some are savers and some are spenders and these habits are learned in childhood. Sooner or later you will learn that you will master money or it will make you its slave. You master it when interest works for you and you are enslaved when interest works against you. Choices you make about debt

and credit card use in college greatly impact your financial status at marriage. The start up lifestyle you choose is crucial. Is it sustainable? Can it handle the unexpected? Our *Good Sense* and *Crown Financial Courses* are a must for every Christian in learning sound Bible based financial principles.

#### IV. AM I MORALLY PREPARED?

**A. Commit yourself to a Biblical perspective** – The theological ethic laid down by Paul is higher than a cultural, psychological, autonomous self one that only asks if it is healthy or unhealthy for us. It is theological because the final authority is God not us. Ultimately this ethic makes us accountable to our God by honoring Him with our body. This higher ethic is seen in these admonitions from Paul:

**1. Strive for holiness** – too often we conceive of this as a negative – giving up fun things instead of a positive characteristic rooted in the character of God. We are to become more like Him – the one who calls us his own. Being sanctified or holy means pleasing God and being conformed to his character and not our culture in our sexual lives. Paul has some teaching here that is practical and unselfish:

- Avoid sexual immorality – *porneia* – prostitution; adultery; fornication
- Learn to control your own body in a holy and honorable manner – **M/F**
- Relate to each other in love not lust so as not to wrong or exploit another

**2. Delay age of dating** – The earlier you date the more vulnerable you become to our sexual culture and those who practice its ways. Studies show those who begin to date at age 12, for example, have a 91% rate of sexual intercourse before graduation. It goes down each year to 20% for those who start to date at age 16. **Why?** At age 16 your brain has the ability to abstract cause and effect much better than at age 12. Thus the 71% difference between a 12-year old who dates having intercourse before graduation and a 16-year old. We live in a sick culture that is ever pushing the age lower and undermining the parent's influence.

**Illus:** On CNN Thursday there was the story of Provincetown, Mass. public schools who now have a policy that any 1<sup>st</sup>-12 grader who requests a condom can get one from the office and they will not, that's right, will not notify the child's parents. In this case, the state is trying to usurp the rights of the parents and desensitize their children on sexual matters. What are they going to do when a teacher sues the school system after losing an eye when a water or something-filled condom explodes when hurled at her by an angry, oversized 3rd grader?

**3. Establish a personal standard of purity** – It is most useful to have this standard in place before you ever start dating. Write it out and say it out loud to yourself. Utilize role-play with a friend or your parent to learn how to say “no” and mean it. If you are already dating and don't have a standard, write one. It is your standard with God's help to keep and defend when challenged. And you will be challenged because of the **Law of Differences** between male and female:

- Girls tend to respond emotionally.
- Boys tend to respond physically.
- Girls tend to play at sex for they fundamentally want - love.
- Boys tend to play at love for what they fundamentally want - sex.

**Quote:** Frances Chan in his book *Crazy Love* says: “Lukewarm people do whatever is necessary to keep themselves from feeling too guilty. They want to do the bare minimum, to be ‘good enough’ without it requiring too much of them. They ask, ‘How far can I go before it’s considered a sin?’ instead of ‘How can I keep myself pure as a temple of the Holy Spirit?’”

**B. Law of Progression** - John Maxwell calls it the Law of Progression.

- The more you do, the more you want to do.
- The more you do, the more it takes to satisfy you.

**Sexual Progression Chart** – project on screen for reference:

You see, what happens is, the farther you go along with your sexual relationship with someone else, the more you want. If you look at the chart, we begin a relationship with emotional expressions: eye contact, words, & symbols. Then it progresses to physical expressions: holding hands, kissing and making out. Now notice the **dark rectangular box**. As we understand God’s perspective of holiness - petting, oral sex and intercourse violate His moral standard if done outside of marriage.

That’s why all of us young and older who are Christian need a personal standard of purity or holiness for our sexual behavior. A boundary that stops before you get to the rectangular box with petting and beyond. That means using words to share and to discuss your boundaries so when you get to those boundaries there will be no surprises or hurt feelings.

**APPLY:** Girls, let me talk straight to you a minute. You have every right to say “no”. Let your “no” be **NO!** Boys, when a girl says “no”, it means “no” not a challenge for more. There is a term for violating a girl’s “no” – it’s called date rape.

Young people, call me old fashioned if you want, but I can tell you that if you are 15 or 16 and already moving into the rectangular area on the **sexual progression chart**, yet you plan to get married at the average age today in the later 20’s, you are inviting trouble. You are inviting trouble because your hormone driven natural desires will want to take over. For you girls this is partly because of your God-given hormone **oxytocin**. He designed it for commitment in marriage and bonding with future children. With no boundary plan, the twin temptations of compromise and rationalize will take over. What starts as a **desire** becomes, over time, an **appetite**.

Young people, I can empathize with where you are in a sex-saturated culture targeting you through the Internet. What you face today is greater than the pre-Internet age, but we still have the same moral compass set forth for every generation of Christians. God's standard of holiness & purity has not changed, only our culture. **His standard is simple – save your body for your mate.**

**Swimsuit boundary** - As a boundary, it boils down to not letting your hands touch what is covered by a reasonable swimsuit or swim trunks. It is much easier to draw that line now on Sunday morning than it will be next Friday or Saturday night. God teaches you to draw it, and in v. 8 Paul reminds us that the *dunamis* (dynamite) power of Holy Spirit helps you keep it. It also says that to reject God's teaching on this matter is to reject Him.

**Detractor:** In a congregation this size, many of you have come to faith out of a secular culture and grew up immersed in it. Some of you have crossed these Biblical boundaries. God loves you and his forgiveness is for the asking. Just because you have crossed that line does not mean you have to cross it again. The more you can say “No” to before marriage or to be faithful to your marriage, the more God will let you say “Yes” to after or in your marriage.

## V. AM I SPIRITUALLY PREPARED?

**A. Be Equally Yoked** – the only command directly related to the selection of a marriage partner is found in **II Cor. 6:14-16** - “Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God.”

**B. Date Christians** – in unequally yoked marriages there will often be a serious clash of values. Statistically you have an 11x greater chance of a successful marriage if you marry of the same faith. In our global multi-faith world, that is an important principle to keep in mind whether you are a Christian or not.

**CLOSE:** So there you have it – Are you “Fit” to be tied? or just “Fit to be tied”?